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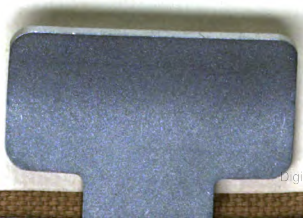

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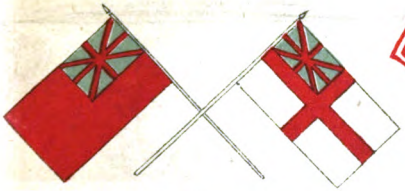

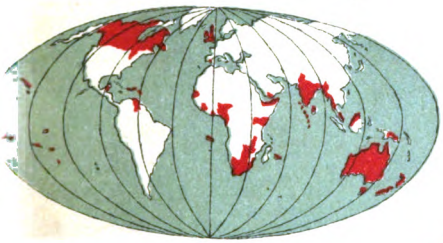

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# THE COMMAND OF THE SEA

BY

SPENSER WILKINSON

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT ALTERNATIVE"

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# I

## SEA POWER AND LAND POWER

THE writer of the Impossible Programme commands the sympathy of his countrymen, chiefly by his belief in England. He is sure that with a true man at the helm the Empire may be steered to a future not less glorious than the past. This patriotic hope and faith have drawn to his papers the attention they deserve. He shares with all thinking men the conviction that the welfare of the Empire requires not only a man but a plan. But his scheme, unfortunately, is not a plan at all, for he depicts an imaginary future without showing the way to it. It is true that an English Statesman must wish the wishes and hope the hopes of his race; but he must also



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justly measure their powers and the forces with which in this actual world they have to contend. He must clearly see what is possible and what not. Statesmanship must be built on a basis more substantial than dreams, and it is in its foundations that the Impossible Programme is weak.

The dreamer is half conscious that the British Empire was founded upon the command of the sea; he speaks of the Cape as situated in "waters over which we must exercise unchallenged supremacy;" yet the first item of his programme is the abandonment of the Mediterranean (whatever he may mean by that phrase), and he seems not to know that to abandon the Mediterranean is inconsistent with "exercising unchallenged supremacy" in any waters at all.

Before the Impossible Programme can be seriously considered it would seem necessary to make clear to ourselves the laws which govern the workings of maritime force. Of

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course, if there are no such laws, if the effect and nature of maritime power is a mystery, then each of us may cherish his private dream about the Mediterranean. But if there are laws, inexorable as that of gravitation, controlling the operation of force at sea, they will be the only safe foundations for a British national policy.

Two wars of the present century, since 1815, have been decided by navies, though in neither of them was there a sea-fight proper — that is, a battle between hostile fleets. The first of these was the war of 1848–9, between Denmark and Germany. In 1848 the United Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, having declared that the Constitution framed for them by the King of Denmark was illegal, were invaded by the Danish army, and the Schleswig-Holstein forces defeated in the battle of Bau. Whereupon Prussia and other German States in alliance with Schleswig-Holstein sent a force



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into the field which completely defeated the Danes in the battle of Schleswig. The Danish army retreated to the island of Alsen, lying close to the peninsula that formed the Danish territory on the mainland. This battle established the superiority of the German forces, and the Danes never ventured another pitched battle against them. But the Danes had a fleet, small but fairly efficient, while the Germans had no fleet at all. The German general found himself checkmated by the Danish fleet. The Danish army in Alsen (which was connected with the mainland by a bridge covered by fortifications against a German crossing) could either stay where it was and threaten his rear if he marched north, or could be moved by sea to any point either in front or in rear of the German troops. Four months after his victory the German commander reported that he had no hope of compelling the Danes to accept terms of

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peace without the help of a fleet. No fleet was to be had, and the Danes held out for two years, after which they were saved by the intervention of the Tsar Nicholas, who, by an ultimatum, compelled Prussia to abandon the cause of Schleswig-Holstein. But the Germans were sick of the war long before it had run its two years' course. The Danes blockaded their ports and freely captured their merchant ships, inflicting immense loss.

Thus, by the aid of a fleet which could not be opposed, the Danes were not merely rendered safe in their islands, but were able to defy the incomparably superior military forces of Germany during two campaigns. The war, though a small one, offers one of the most striking examples on record of the enormous effect of the command of the sea.

The second war illustrates not the help which the command of the sea gives to the

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weaker military Power, but the terrific force which it adds to the stronger. It is the American Civil War.

The usual explanation of this war is that the North was able to overcome the South by the superior numbers of its armies. But this is less than half the truth. The South was beaten because, as it had no fleet, the North commanded the sea. Lee was never beaten in battle except when he invaded the Northern States. In Virginia he repulsed every attack made upon him until a few days before the end.

Grant and Sherman in the west defeated the Confederate armies. Grant gaining possession in 1862 and 1863 of the upper half of the Mississippi, of which Farragut with the fleet conquered the lower half. The conquest of the Mississippi cut the Confederacy in two, and deprived the principal eastern half of the resources of the States west of the river. Grant then defeated the Confederate

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army at Chattanooga, and left Sherman in 1864 to push on into the heart of the Confederate States, to Atlanta, the chief railway centre of the South. The decisive blow, in a military sense, was inflicted by Sherman when he marched from Atlanta to Savannah, and then from Savannah right through the seaboard States to Raleigh in North Carolina. This great raid was possible only because Sherman was certain when he reached the sea to find a Federal fleet from which he could draw supplies, and which would then be a sure base for him as he advanced northwards parallel with the coast. The decisive military blow, therefore, depended on the fleet. Grant's army, too, was always, during its campaigns against Lee, supplied by sea.

Even these advantages would have led to no decisive result had it not been for the blockade of the Confederate coasts. As soon as the war began the blockade was pro-

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claimed. The Federal navy, small at the outset, was rapidly increased, and by the end of 1862 the blockade was effective along all the 2,400 miles of coast from the Potomac to the Rio Grande. By this blockade the South was starved. The Southern States grew cotton, tobacco, and rice. They lived and grew rich by exchanging these products for foodstuffs, manufactures, and money. But the blockade stopped all traffic except the mere fragmentary dealings of blockade runners. The Southern cotton and tobacco lay unsold. No money could be earned, no food-stuffs imported. The Confederacy was impoverished and its population famished. In the Spring of 1864 there was not in the State of Virginia food for Lee's army, nor the means of bringing into Virginia any surplus from other States, had such a surplus existed. The armies, not half fed, could not be kept together. When Lee at last left Richmond, to escape being enclosed between

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Grant and Sherman, he made for the only railway by which he could feed his army. When soon afterwards he was surrounded and had to surrender, he had also to beg for rations from his captors. The Northern fleet by closing the sea for the South starved the Confederacy, and so made it a prey to the Northern armies.

But though the command of the sea decided the war, the Northern navy was not strong enough to fulfil all its tasks. Half a dozen Confederate cruisers, which the Northern fleet, being absorbed by the blockade, had not spare force to hunt down and capture in time, made war upon Federal trade, and the destruction accomplished by the *Alabama*, the *Sumter*, and the rest of them, sufficed to make an end of the American shipping trade. It passed into neutral hands.

This view of the American Civil War is both new and true. I have taken it from a very remarkable lecture on the influence

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of sea power in this war, delivered last January in Berlin by Captain Stenzel, the first living writer in Germany upon naval strategy.

The American Civil War and the Danish War of 1848–9 illustrate two features of the command of the sea. If of two States at war having a sea coast one has and the other has not a force of fighting ships, the one which has the ships will be able to move troops freely by sea in transports, and to land them pretty much where it pleases on the enemy's coast. It can also blockade the enemy's ports, and if he is dependent upon sea traffic, may, by preventing that traffic, inflict damage to any extent, amounting in the extreme case, as it did in the American Civil War, to ruin. But the Power which has this command of the sea is not always able to protect its own trade from hostile cruisers, and its own seaborne trade may by them be injured or even destroyed.

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These two wars serve as a commentary upon the great conflict with France from 1805 to 1815, in which the lessons of both were exemplified on a larger scale. By the beginning of 1806 England was in the position of having a fighting fleet which there was no fighting fleet to oppose. The Spanish and Dutch navies had been destroyed, the French navy so weakened and demoralized that it could not be used as an effective fighting force against the British, and the only other fleet that needed to be considered, that of Denmark, was in 1807 captured entire by the English.

The British Government made a double use of this command of the sea. The ports or coasts of her enemies were declared in a state of blockade, and as, under the Continental system, the ports of all central Europe were closed against her, the blockade covered all the coasts of Germany and Denmark, the Low Countries, France,

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and Italy. This blockade was not what is now understood by the term. In those days the mere declaration that a port was "blockaded," even though no ship of war was near the port, was held to justify the seizure at sea of any ship sailing for that port. Thus the declaration of blockade enabled the English to capture merchant ships belonging either to France, Denmark, Holland, or any of the Italian or North German States, whether England was at war with the particular State or not. In this way the shipping trade of these States was as good as destroyed. The French and their allies employed cruisers and privateers for the attack upon English trade; but though many British ships were captured, English sea trade could not be destroyed, because there was no available neutral flag under which goods could take refuge. Accordingly, with the rules then upheld by England on the subject of blockade and

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of trade under the neutral flag, England in this war acquired a monopoly of sea carriage, at least as against the European States.

The possession of a fighting fleet which there was nothing to oppose enabled her also to exercise a considerable influence upon the Continental land war. She could move troops by sea, and her enemies could not. By sending armies to the Spanish peninsula she dealt Napoleon a similar blow to that which, on a grander scale, Sherman struck against the Southern Confederacy; and while Prussian, Austrian, and Russian armies confronted the French on the northern and eastern frontiers, a considerable French force was tied on the southern frontier by the joint forces of Spain and England. France, like the Confederacy, was impoverished and half-starved by the blockade, while armies attacked her from both ends of her territory.

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These wars illustrate some of the natural laws governing the operations of force in the conflict of nations. It is plain, for example, that a nation cannot be struck down and compelled to unconditional surrender by fleets alone. Before submission can be enforced its armies must be defeated. But every civilized nation is so dependent for its wealth and its supplies upon export and import that its armies will be paralyzed if the avenues of export and import can long be closed. In proportion to the share of sea traffic in export and import is the power of an unopposed fleet by blockade of the ports to stop the vital circulation of trade, and thus to facilitate the overthrow of armies, which, to be efficient, must be constantly supplied with provisions, clothing, arms, and money. This commercial blockade is, of course, possible only when the blockaded side has no naval force wherewith to oppose it.

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It seems probable that the action of cruisers against an enemy's merchant ships will suffice, if it is not stopped, to drive the trade from the enemy's to a neutral flag, provided there are neutral ships able to take the trade. And it is evident from the history of the American Civil War that a Power may have the command of the sea as against its enemy, and yet be unable to prevent the enemy's cruisers from inflicting irreparable injury on its trade. The *Alabama* preyed on American shipping from July, 1862, to June, 1863, when she was sunk. Yet the Federal navy in December, 1862, numbered as many as 427 ships of all classes. The inference is that a navy to pursue two objects at a time must have a force adequate for both of them. The Federals required an enormous force to maintain the blockade which was essential to their success; they had not a sufficient surplus to enable them effectually to chase

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and find the *Alabama*. To crush the Confederacy was a necessity of their existence, and they therefore sacrificed, what was to them at the time of less importance, their own mercantile marine.

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## II

## NATIONAL POLICY

The Peace of 1815 left England not merely with the command of the sea but with a monopoly of maritime force. She was the only European Power with a navy; for all the fleets except the French had been destroyed, and the French fleet had been so crippled and weakened that it did not count. England was the only European Power with a commercial marine, for the shipping trade of all the other Powers had been destroyed in the war. The American merchant marine had suffered ruinous losses in the war of 1812, and, as has been seen, was destroyed fifty years later in the Civil War.

The British Empire, as we know it, is



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the consequence of this double monopoly. For more than half a century England was the world's carrier and the policeman of all seas. Without a dream of interference she was able to send her troops where she would; to move whole nations of colonists to the United States, Australia, Canada, and the Cape. She had the command of all markets, first by her monopoly of the sea, and secondly by the fact that all the Continental countries came out of the war devastated and ruined, while English trade and manufacture had continuously flourished. Thus she had a great start in the race for wealth; she could best and soonest take advantage of the inventions of the steam engine, the locomotive, and the steamer. She was able undisturbed to extend and consolidate her already extensive acquisitions in India. Her spindles and looms spun and wove, and the world bought the yarns and the cloth, for there was no other seller.

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The generation born after the war, born into these immeasurable advantages, took them all for granted, thinking the peculiar position of Great Britain to be a part of the order of the universe, and thanking God that they were not as other men. Cobden spent half his life cursing the war and believing that without it the nation would have been better off. To-day the disciples of Cobden sit on both the front benches of the House of Commons and imagine, with the full approval of at least half of their constituents, that the British Empire is fixed on to the globe like a continent, and that nothing can disturb it short of a universal earthquake. British manufacturers go on spinning and weaving as their fathers did, and expect the world to buy.

While Great Britain has slept in her dream of prosperity, the whole conditions of the world have changed. The nations that were ruined in 1815 have recovered and

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grown prosperous. Where there were then on the political map blanks marked "Germany" and "Italy," geographical expressions not denoting Powers, there are now great nations. Where the British spinner and weaver used to deliver their products to purchasers whom no rival visited, the German trader now offers similar wares, perhaps not as good, but cheaper and better suited to the buyer's taste. Other nations have their commercial marines, their lines of great steamers, and are keen competitors in the carrying trade, in which, however, Great Britain as yet retains the lion's share. Other nations have built fighting fleets, so that now the British navy has rivals which, taken together, far outmatch it. The idea, in which for half a century all the world acquiesced, that all lands beyond the sea were the natural property of England, is dead and gone, and the other European Powers think themselves

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well entitled to a share in the lands of the earth.

Before discussing the policy required by these changed conditions it may be well to say what is meant by the word. A policy is national action directed to an end or purpose. The object set up must be one that the nation values and appreciates, or else the Government will have no support in its efforts to attain it. And the means must be suitable to the end.

These things are best illustrated in the concrete, so an example or two may be taken. Some time ago the troops of the Congo Free State entered the basin of the Upper Nile. The British Government protested, thereby making a claim to the ownership of that part of the Nile basin. After negotiations the Free State admitted the British ownership in an agreement by which the area between the Nile from Lado to Fashoda, the Bahr el Ghazal and the limit

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of the Congo watershed, was leased by Great Britain to the Congo State. Thus Lord Rosebery twice solemnly announced a British claim to this district, first by his protest, and secondly by his lease, for a lease implies a good title in the lessor, and usually also a guarantee of possession to the lessee. The French Government objected to the lease, and induced the Congo Free State not only to annul it but to pledge itself to hand over the stations established within the area to French troops.

Here we have an instance of what a policy ought not to be: there is an object, but no consideration of the means of securing it. Lord Rosebery's object was to keep the French out of the area in question. There is only one way by which a nation can be kept out of territory that it wants to have, and that is by force. The threat of force may be enough, but unless it is clear that force will be used and that force is available

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there is no adequate reason for the coveting Power to stay its hand. Lord Rosebery was afraid of the French, and he thought to hide behind the skirts of the Congo State. But the Congo State is still more afraid of the French, and with more excusable folly thought it would be safe behind the power of Great Britain.

A similar instance of wishing for an object, but fearing to use the means of securing it, forms the recent history of Central Asia. It is well understood that the peace of India requires the Russian troops to be kept at a fair distance from the great range of mountains to the north and north-west of India. The simplest way to prevent their approach was for England to take possession of the country up to the line beyond which a Russian advance is dangerous. Instead of this, British Cabinets have given Abdurrahman Khan the means of creating an Afghan kingdom, and have bound themselves

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and the nation to keep the Russians out of his territories. We have, in short, undertaken to go to war with Russia whenever it suits Russia to invade Afghanistan. But no arrangements have been made for such a war, and no man in the Cabinet knows how it is to be carried to a successful issue—that is, how the Russians, once in Herat or Balkh, or on the south side of the Upper Oxus, are to be ejected.

In 1755 the British Government had a policy of a different kind. The French claimed the part of the North American Continent behind the Alleghany mountains, the basins of the Ohio and the Mississippi. The English also claimed this area. When the French sent troops to establish posts on the Ohio, the British Government sent troops to turn them out. They prepared for the war boldly, and they made such alliances as they could with the other enemies of France.

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The basis of every policy is the power of carrying out your design: that is, in the last resort, the power of beating your enemy. Not that the object of any statesman, or of any policy, is a war. The statesman always wants a peace, but he wants a peace that will suit his nation. The French at this moment want peace with England, provided they may replace England in Egypt, in the Nile basin, and in some other places. To have peace upon these conditions they might be willing to try and obtain it by fighting, and no doubt will make the attempt as soon as they have any confidence that it will succeed.

Suppose that Lord Rosebery keeps to his purpose of excluding the French from the Nile basin, and that the French stick to their purpose of entering it. There will be a war. Suppose the Russian troops cross the Upper Oxus, on the banks of which they have been heard of more than once in recent

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years, there will again be a war. These are not abstract speculations, but very practical politics. For in each case a war can be avoided only either by the French (or Russians) giving up their plans, or by the British Government abandoning in Africa a claim solemnly asserted, in Asia a pledge renewed over and over again. It seems prudent, before entering into dreams of what may happen in the next century, to get clear as to what must happen the moment that any one of the differences of opinion between England or France, or between England and other countries, reaches the point where neither will draw back. There is only one way in which this deadlock, of which the name is war, can be avoided. It consists in England's drawing back perpetually, as, indeed, she has been doing for the last nine years. I believe most Englishmen dislike the process, and would prefer even war, and I am sure all will agree

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that claims which a Government is ready to let drop as soon as they are opposed, ought not to be so often made.

The object which a British Government must necessarily have in view, if war should arise, is the peace by which the war is to be ended. It is evident that no peace will be satisfactory to the nation which leaves the Empire diminished or the rights in dispute abandoned. But it is equally evident that the other party to the war will have similar feelings. Neither side will agree to the other side's conditions except upon compulsion, or upon perceiving that to go on with the fighting will leave his case worse than when it began, and with no prospect of improvement.

What means, then, has England of compelling the French to accept English terms of peace, or of resisting French efforts to compel the acceptance of French terms? In other words, what are the conditions of a

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war, not after various imaginary improvements and preparations, which we cannot be sure will ever be made, but now, between England and France? The same question should be asked and answered, with regard not only to a war between England and France, but with reference also to a war between England and Russia, and to a war in which England might be opposed both to Russia and France; and the effects upon each situation of the probable action of other Powers should be considered before any policy, much more before anything so definite as a programme, can be proposed by any man or any statesman who considers himself responsible for what he says or writes.

I propose in my next paper very briefly to examine the nature of the first of these wars. But before doing so I must make an explanation which experience shows to be necessary. A consideration of the conditions of

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competition in the world, ought not to involve feelings of enmity. The French nation has my respect and admiration. It has done a great work in the world, and represents lofty ideals as truly as any other nation. France has the same right as England, or as Germany, to aspire to the first place. I doubt whether any of the differences between ourselves and the French are in themselves worth fighting over, and I believe the greatest danger of war lies in misunderstanding. As we constantly make claims only to let them drop, the French have acquired the habit of taking our protests as not serious. They may be led in this way into pressing a point once too often, and we into a refusal to concede it after the French have gone too far to feel that they can draw back with honour. A clear understanding of the relations of force, upon which all negotiations ultimately rest, may avert this danger. If we make up our minds what our vital inter-

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ests are—the rest of the world knows pretty well—we shall better distinguish between quarrels that are trifles and claims that are meant as a challenge. The attempt to analyze possible wars may therefore be dissociated from all uncharitable feelings.

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## III

## THE MEDITERRANEAN

The admirable treatises on naval war which have appeared during the last five years have left no room for doubt as to the broad features of a conflict between England and France. Such a war must begin by a fight for the command of the sea—that is, the two navies will fight until one has destroyed the other or broken its force so that it must withdraw from the contest and retire to its fortified harbours. The winning side will then take means to prevent the weaker defeated fleet from doing any further harm, will endeavour to destroy the enemy's merchant shipping, or to shut it off from the sea, and will be at liberty to move armies

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across the sea. The losing side will do all that it can for the destruction of the commerce of the victor. Probably, from the beginning, there will be a chase of merchant ships by cruisers. The French, at any rate, would be likely to keep their merchant ships at home, and to send cruisers against British ships. But until the decisive battles have been fought the protection of trading ships is a secondary matter. You may cover the sea with cruisers, but if your fighting navy is destroyed you will lose your trade and your shipping all the same. Therefore, you cannot spare for the protection of trade a single ship, man, or gun that could be usefully employed in fighting the enemy's fleet. If, then, British merchant ships are to continue to sail the seas after the outbreak of war, but before the great battles have been fought, there must be a superabundance of cruisers; there must be all that the admirals need or can use for the great fleets, as well

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as others to spare, for only the spare ones can at this stage be used for the protection of commerce. If this precaution is neglected, and these extra cruisers are not ready—they cannot be taken from the fighting fleets—the first consequence must be a wholesale laying up of British ships, an extensive sale of them to neutrals, and the transfer of much of the carrying trade to neutral vessels. This of itself would be an almost irreparable misfortune.

The command of the sea is to be had only by destroying or crippling the hostile navy. Until this has been done the transport of troops by sea is a dangerous operation. At any rate it is one not to be undertaken except with the certainty that the enemy's fighting ships cannot molest the transports between the beginning of the embarkation and the close of the landing. So long, therefore, as the French fleets keep the sea the English coaling stations and colonies cannot, except



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at great risk, be reinforced from home. So long, also, as the English fleets keep the sea, the French colonies and oversea stations must depend upon their own resources.

After the two navies have fought it out, and one or other has been thoroughly defeated —a half defeat is out of the question, for the side which has once gained an advantage will make the most of it—will come the epoch of ulterior operations. It is here that the great difference between the situations of the two countries comes in. The French, once they had acquired the command of the sea, would blockade the coast of Great Britain, or at least the principal seaports, and would land an army in the country. Against a Power commanding the sea a landing cannot be prevented, for the flotilla can choose its point, and when it has appeared there the defender has no time to make counter preparations. A blockade, even though imperfect, would very quickly impoverish the country, and an

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army landed and constantly reinforced—as by a Power commanding the sea it could and would be—would be exceedingly difficult to resist. For an army based on a fleet can change the situation of its base from time to time. It could march from point to point of the coast, sure of always finding the fleet when it reached the next point. Between the blockade and the invading army Great Britain would be paralyzed, and no peace could be hoped for except upon terms that would make an end of the Empire such as it now is.

If the English navy came out victorious, and succeeded in driving the French fleets defeated into their ports, England would hardly be able with any prospect of success to send an army to France. A force could be landed no doubt; but it would be so completely outnumbered as to be able to effect nothing. The English plan would therefore be to blockade the French coasts, and to



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send expeditions against French colonies. The French might be ejected from Tonquin and Cochin China, from Guiana, from the West Indies, from Réunion and Madagascar, and from parts of northern Africa. But if they refused to agree to the surrender of the colonies thus conquered there would, in the absence of an army able to conquer France, be no means of compelling them to a peace. With land frontiers communicating by many railways with Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, and Belgium, France cannot be starved by a mere maritime blockade. She could hold out for a long time, and trust to the chapter of accidents—perhaps to interests and necessities—to bring some other Power to her aid. England, therefore, unless she were prepared to continue indefinitely the gigantic effort of a blockade of the French coasts, would probably find it prudent to be content with moderate terms, say the renunciation of French claims upon Egypt and

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the Nile Valley, and upon Madagascar, the cession of Réunion, and the cession of all rights and claims on the Newfoundland shores and waters.

Thus in a war with France, whatever be its occasion, England has everything to lose and little to gain: the issue depends upon the course of the conflict between the two navies. Safety for England is to be had only by destroying the French fleets; while for France the sure road to success is the destruction of the English fleets. Every motive impels each side to collect the strongest fleet that it can muster, and to go in search of the enemy and attack him. But no prudent commander will engage in a battle that he does not see his way to win. He must expect victory from some superiority of which he is conscious, either from numbers, from better weapons, or from greater skill. Nelson won his battles by so arranging that he could attack a part of the

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enemy's fleet with the whole of his own, the rest of the enemy's ships being unable to join in the action till too late. Even Nelson would scarcely have attacked a force very greatly outnumbering his own unless he clearly saw how he could in some way neutralize the superiority. The best chance that an admiral can get is to meet, when his own fleet is large, a smaller one of the enemy. He has then the odds in his favour, and will, if he can, compel the weaker enemy to fight; he will do everything in his power to attack him.

So long as a contest with France for the command of the sea is possible, the British fleet has no business during peace to keep one of its halves in the Mediterranean. On the outbreak of a war the Admiralty must get together the strongest fleet they can make up, and send it to find and attack the French fleet or the principal French squadron. Wherever the French fleet is the

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English fleet must go, must attack it, defeat it if possible, and then attack it again, never letting go until the French fleet is destroyed. If the French fleet escapes into a French maritime fortress, the entrance to that fortress must be watched until it comes out, and as soon as it appears it must be again attacked. The time for dividing the English fleet is after a victory, if the French fleet divides. Then the English admiral may divide his forces for pursuit. But until a decisive battle has been won dispersion of force is an opportunity to the enemy.

There is one case in which at the beginning of a war the principal British fleet should make for the Mediterranean. Suppose the French fleets should stay in their ports, the British would station off the French Channel ports forces able to contend with those which they sheltered, and would send a large force to watch the exit from Toulon. This would give the English the command

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of the sea. But it is a case that need hardly be seriously considered; first, because the French will not go to war so long as their admirals dare not seek a battle; and, secondly, because the British navy has not the superiority of numbers necessary to ensure the success of this plan.

The French may adopt a different policy. If their fleets unite near Cadiz and sail out into the Atlantic, they are bound to get a good start, for the two English squadrons must unite before following them. In what direction must the English admiral then seek the French fleet? This is the crux that will test his strategy. For if he sails off on a false scent the French admiral may make for the Channel, and thus have the temporary superiority there which would make possible a landing in England. Whether an invasion would be attempted in the circumstances may be doubted, for an invasion before the defenders' fleet has been

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crushed is a desperate hazard. French naval strategists declare that it would be tried, and the apprehension of its possibility will always hang like a millstone at the neck of the Admiralty. Public opinion in England, that is the universal knowledge that the French have a first-rate modern army of practically unlimited numbers, and that the British army is not what it should be, will keep near at hand a portion of the fleet which, by its presence, even though it cannot risk a battle, may prevent or delay invasion.

The English admiral, with his whole fleet except this portion, improperly called a reserve, would have to find the French fleet and attack it; if it goes to the Atlantic he must follow it there, and into every sea until he has fought it. If it goes into the Mediterranean, into the Mediterranean after it he must go. To stop at Gibraltar, as the author of the Impossible Programme suggests, is to

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give up the fight and to admit a drawn game. The British fleet once halted at Gibraltar would have to remain there, ever ready for action against the combined French fleet, by day or night, ever on the watch, until the end of the war. But why in that case should the war ever end? England, with a portion of her fleet tied to the Channel, and her great fleet tied to Gibraltar, with no possibility of trade with the Mediterranean or through the Suez Canal, would suffer more from this privation than France from the loss of her Atlantic trade. The force which could thus watch at Gibraltar for the French fleet could just as well watch at Toulon, but with the difference that while it was at Toulon the Mediterranean would be an English sea behind it; while it was at Gibraltar a French one in front of it. Moreover, if the English fleet stays at Gibraltar there must be a second fleet in the Red Sea to prevent any French ships

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from passing the Suez Canal. This second British force would be more economically used to strengthen the watch at Toulon.

In order to gain a peace you must cause the enemy the greatest inconvenience from the continuance of the war. The French will suffer little from a war which cannot directly touch France, and which leaves her in unimpeded communication with Corsica, Algeria, and Tunis, and, according to the Impossible Programme, with a French Egypt also. But if her fleet is at Toulon, and cannot leave the port without fighting a superior British force, France will be cut off from all these places, and suffer from the severance.

In short, to "abandon the Mediterranean" in a war with France means to give up the game. The war means that unless the British navy can destroy the French navy the French navy will destroy the British Empire. Is it conceivable that we can enter

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into such a struggle and yet renounce the attempt to destroy the French navy when it enters the sea where it can fight with most convenience to itself? Will the French navy on that account renounce the attempt to destroy our own?

But if you mean, when the time comes, to follow up a French fleet into the Mediterranean, you must keep Malta. Until the great battles have been fought the French cannot attack the island. They may send a cruiser or two there, but what harm can a cruiser do to a fortified arsenal? If they send a fleet of battleships to Malta, the English admiral will be upon them with his fleet. If they send a few battleships, they will have weakened their fighting fleet before the decisive battle, which is absurd. Malta, therefore, is quite safe till after the great sea fight or fights which will decide which navy is the better. If the English lose these battles the French may then go

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and take Malta, and a good deal besides. But if the French are defeated the English fleet will follow them home, and wait off Toulon for their second attempt. Then Malta will be useful as a coal-store nearer than England, and as a base from which the fleet can be supplied. It is not so good as Minorca, but we have not Minorca, and it is better than nothing. In the third stage of the war, assuming continued success for the English, Malta will be an invaluable station for the supply of the cruisers which will protect British trade and destroy French trade in the Mediterranean.

The dreamer has two arguments for the abandonment of Malta. First of all he will spare the troops that form the garrison. But in this he contradicts himself, for he proposes to take and fortify Tangiers, which will absorb as large a garrison as he has saved (just as he will move the British troops from Egypt to send them to Morocco,

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though 60,000 extra troops would be required to defend Morocco from the French in Algeria). But if you fortify Tangiers ever so wisely it will not close the Straits. Only a fleet can bar the passage through the Straits, at least until a gun has been found that will sink an ironclad ten miles from its muzzle in the dark.

Secondly, says the dreamer, the abandonment of the Mediterranean would "enable us to move our naval forces where they would be of the greatest service." The place where our fleets will be of service is wherever the French fleets may be. The possession of Malta will not hinder the movements of our fleets unless they are unable to beat the French. If the French fleets do not beat our own, the place where they are most likely to be found is in the Mediterranean.

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## IV

## DEFENCE BY A NAVY

Suppose that, during a war, a hostile squadron appears at some small island, say in the West Indies, belonging to Great Britain. How is the island to be defended? Evidently, if no British squadron arrives on the scene, there will be a contest between the British subjects on the island and the enemy on board the squadron. If the inhabitants are unarmed they must surrender. If they are well armed and led, but without great guns equal to those of the ships, they cannot prevent a landing, but may fight a battle after the enemy has landed. If they have great guns within proper works they may resist siege and

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assault for an indefinite time. The arrival at any time before their surrender of a British squadron will relieve them by transferring the fighting to the sea. So long as you can guarantee that whenever a hostile squadron appears off the island a British squadron able to beat it shall come upon the scene, the islanders need not disturb themselves. They need not, except for their own amusement, keep a soldier or a rifle or a cartridge in the place.

This perpetual peace on the island can be equally secured by using the same squadron in another way. Instead of staying near the island it might stay near the enemy's coast to attack and defeat his squadron the moment it set sail. Either plan would be suitable for the defence of a single small island. But if you had to protect a hundred islands dotted all over the globe, you would for the first method need a hundred fleets, each better than the enemy's; whereas by the second

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method one fleet sure to beat that of the enemy is enough for all cases.

The British Empire is, for the purpose of a war with any Power except Russia or the United States, equivalent to a number of islands scattered over the oceans. All these islands can be kept at perpetual peace by the systematic use of a strong navy. The moment you suspect that any Power is contemplating an attack, you at once, in peace, tell off a squadron against each of his squadrons, and arrange that each of your own squadrons shall immediately place itself within touch of a given squadron of the enemy, and shall keep perpetual watch upon it. If in this way you have every ship of the possible enemy "shadowed," and if in each case the shadowing force is able to give a good account of the force shadowed, the enemy will either not make war, or will keep his fleets in port, or will have every one of them attacked with the odds against it as soon as



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the war begins. If at any time during the war one of his fleets goes into port, its "shadowing" force will wait for it outside the port. Your islands, however numerous and however scattered, will all be safe. So long as you can keep up the shadowing game, and do not want to damage the enemy on land, your islanders can all live at ease, without a soldier, or a rifle, or a cartridge. Moreover, if you can shadow every cruiser that the enemy possesses, your merchant ships will be as safe as your islands.

This method amounts to the annexation of the whole sea, as against the hostile Power, for the duration of the war, a result which is indeed implied in the technical term "command of the sea." There is no other known method by which from the beginning of a war the command of the sea can be retained.

The plan just described implies a resolute Government, and a navy always ready and decidedly superior in quality and quantity to

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that of the adversary. If it breaks down, either through the hesitation of the Government, the unreadiness of the navy in plan or in preparation, or the defeat of one of the squadrons, a different state of things arises. The enemy then has one or more squadrons at large, which until it or they have been found and confronted endanger every one of your islands and every one of your "shadowing" fleets.

The ultimate security of your islands lies in the destruction of the enemy's fleets. Therefore you must strain every nerve for that immediate object, and meanwhile your islands must take care of themselves. In other words, from the moment that you fail to "shadow" every one of the enemy's squadrons, or that one of them is at large, every single island you mean to keep safe must have its own military defence independent of the navy, proportionate to its importance and to the kind of attack that



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can be made. For an island of no vital importance this independent defence matters little. If the enemy takes it you will take it back again after you have destroyed his fleets. But if the place is one which you cannot afford to lose, it must have its own means of resistance. If a coaling station, it must have a garrison that can hold it until it can be relieved, and the garrison must have the necessary implements in the way of guns and forts. To keep ships to guard such a place is to keep them away from their work, the destruction of the enemy's ships, and is, therefore, bad economy. The garrisons, by rendering vital points secure, leave the navy free to fight for that command of the sea which secures the whole Empire. The most important island upon which an attack could be made is, of course, Great Britain; and while the command of the sea is in suspense Great Britain should be secure against a *coup de main*. There should be in

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Great Britain a force able and ready to defeat any force that might during the absence of fleets be landed upon the island.

In the long run the defence of Great Britain consists in the destruction of the hostile navy. The best and quickest way to effect this is to employ every ship, the whole naval force of the nation, in the attack upon that navy; the whole British navy should therefore be sent to the point or points where the enemy's navy is. A British fleet tied to the Channel, if there is no enemy's fleet there, is simply lying idle; it is force unused. In short, a British fleet at home while there are enemy's ships undestroyed is in the wrong place. The only reason for keeping it here is to prevent a sudden landing, which it will better prevent by fighting an enemy's fleet; and if proper arrangements exist to deal with such a landing, the harm which the attempt can make before a fleet appears to frustrate it cannot be great. There is a

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distinction between a fleet kept near home to prevent sudden invasion, which is a wrong employment for it, and a fleet in reserve, for which at times the Channel might be the right place. The plan of "shadowing," or confronting all the enemy's squadrons, requires a reserve squadron or force ready at any moment to make good a weak point in the system; the use of such a reserve being to move at once to the point where help is needed. But a fleet obliged to keep in the Channel or at any point in order to attack transports, is not, so long as this purpose lasts, a reserve to the fleets operating against the enemy; it is a force taken from them.

The function of local defence in the struggle for the command of the sea is to secure the points vital to the navy, and thereby to enable the navy to devote all its energies undivided to the task of crushing the hostile fleets. During this stage of the war the army must furnish a series of garrisons,

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securing Great Britain and the coaling stations and naval bases abroad against sudden and brief attack. The object of these local defences is to gain time; for the moment you know that an island is attacked you can send to it a squadron proportionate to the attacking force, and this squadron, employed in the attack on a hostile squadron, is put to a proper use. The time during which the local defence must be able to hold out is that which will be needed to give the Government notice of the attack, together with that which will be needed for the relieving squadron to receive its orders and to reach the scene of action. A squadron on the spot would be a better defence than a land garrison with guns and works; but you cannot have a squadron at every point of the Empire; and if you had there would be no fleet left to occupy the enemy's fleets. The local defences are, therefore, necessary as an insurance against local attacks that are possible so long as a

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hostile naval force can evade your own naval force.

After the naval war has been fought out the army will have other and larger tasks. If the navy has won its fight the army can be used for attack wherever attack may promise to be effective. If the navy were to suffer reverses the army would have to defend Great Britain, not against the raid of, say, 100,000 men thrown on to some point of the south coast, but against five times that force landed by degrees at any point or points of the whole coast of England or Scotland.

Such, in brief, is the theory of a war for the defence of the British Empire. It enables us to distinguish between three kinds of war for our own country. There is first the war in which Great Britain begins with the command of the sea and keeps it; secondly, the war in which, not holding the command of the sea at the first, she eventually acquires it; and thirdly, the war in which

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the enemy ends by gaining command of the sea. The third kind of war means the destruction of the British Empire, and, if the enemy wishes, the conquest of Britain. The second kind would put the British Empire into a condition of temporary dissolution for a longer or shorter time, the duration of which cannot be determined in advance, and would bring irreparable loss to British trade. The first kind, and the first alone, would secure the continuous maintenance of the Empire and of British trade, and the possibility of the further expansion of both.

The first kind of war requires that before a shot is fired, and irrespective of a declaration of war, every hostile squadron shall be under the care of a British squadron morally sure to beat it; that at the same time every known hostile cruiser shall be nursed by a British cruiser, its match; and that other British cruisers shall be distributed upon the

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trade routes of the world, on the look-out for such commerce-destroyers as will not reveal themselves until hostilities have begun.

If the navy can "shadow" the enemy's fighting fleets, but not all his cruisers, the command of the sea will be kept; but the unwatched cruisers, before they are caught, will have the same effect as the *Alabama* and the *Sumter*—they will impose a premium upon neutral as against British ships.

If, however, the enemy's fighting fleets, or any of them, once get to sea unattacked, the connection between the parts of the Empire, represented by the power of sending troops from one point to another, will be suspended until such time as the navy has restored its supremacy, expressed in the complete surveillance of the whole hostile navy. This may take a long time: and in case of mismanagement, or of an accession of force to the enemy, say by the assistance of the navy

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of a third Power, might possibly lead to a war of the third category, and to irretrievable disaster. In any case the moment the war passes from the first to the second class, the risks to merchant ships and the losses of trade must greatly increase.

The commercial and industrial suffering that must accompany a war of the second class, might seem a sufficient reason for insuring that a war shall always be of the first class. But there are far weightier reasons. One of them is the defence of India. That great dependency during a war of the second class cannot receive help from England, but must defend itself. Accordingly, a war in which Great Britain let slip, even for a time, the command of the sea, would offer a great opportunity for Russia if she cared to join our enemies. But the supreme reason for making the navy equal to a war of the first kind is, that with such a navy there will be peace. No power will

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begin a war without some better prospect than the destruction of its navy, and the loss of its seaborne trade, and of its colonies. If, therefore, Great Britain keeps a fleet, able, from the beginning, to take entire charge of the navy of any one Power, no Power alone will go to war with her. If the British navy has this proportion to any two navies, no two Powers will risk the collision. The greater the hostile combination required to bring the war down to the second class, the greater will be the probability of peace.

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## V

## THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

I HAVE distinguished between three kinds of war or three degrees of defence for the British Empire. In the first, England could retain, from beginning to end, the greater part of her trade and the whole of her possessions. In the second she would lose at once a considerable portion of her trade, and could hardly retain the whole of her possessions in case an attack by a land Power were made in Asia or America during the course of the maritime struggle; in the third she would lose everything.

The first war means comparative security; the second means a commercial crisis worse than the Overend-Gurney panic, the City of

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Glasgow Bank panic, and the Lancashire cotton famine all rolled into one; the third means general ruin and starvation.

We cannot choose for ourselves, when a war comes, which degree it shall have; it will belong to the kind for which we are ready. For the three grades of result correspond to three grades of previous exertion. Defeat you can have without any trouble. Victory after a great struggle may come if you have made preparations enough to ward off defeat at first and to be able to bring all your resources systematically into play: victory at once can be had only by the persistent effort of the nation carried on during years of preparation.

We cannot altogether please ourselves, either, whether we will have a war or not, though at a price we can put it off for a time. But the price is exorbitant. So long as you will consent to be elbowed out of markets and shuffled out of territorial claims, and

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generally so long as you acquiesce in the demands raised by other Powers, you can have peace. But every backward move which you make is a blow to your trade, and depresses the national vitality. It is quite possible in this way to ruin your whole trade, and sap the energies of a whole generation. If this is to be prevented, one of the Powers which are always pressing claims will have to receive the plain answer, "No!" and that answer cannot be given without risk of a war.

Thus, if British trade is to be kept up, it is absolutely necessary to be ready for a war of the first kind—that is, for prompt and complete victory at sea; and this course, evidently the best if war must come, is also the surest way of averting war altogether.

Given the right breed of men, victory depends chiefly upon forethought, of course upon forethought translated into actual preparation. A great commander is a man who has thought long and hard about war, the

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war of his own time with all its improvements, and has thought it out until his mind is perfectly clear. As soon as Nelson has the command of a squadron he begins to coach his captains in his own particular way of fighting. He has it quite ready, having worked on it in his mind all his life. He has thought it out to transparent clearness and conviction, and he spends his time in instilling his idea into his subordinates. Accordingly, his battles are all fought on a system intelligently applied, and they are all decisive victories.

Every war has to be thought out in advance. Not that a programme can be prearranged, or a plan drawn out, as it is in an architect's office. But the way in which new weapons of all sorts are to be used, and the modifications that inventions and the general progress of society bring with them into war must be ascertained, and in accordance with the results of this inquiry the

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character of a coming war must be foreseen.

With this view of the future war in his mind a great naval commander would wish to create a navy as an instrument appropriate to the work to be done with it. He would try to regulate the design, the armament, and the number of his ships according to the needs of the fighting which he could foresee; and above all to regulate by those needs the training of his officers and men. But modern war is so complicated that he would need assistance in watching and studying his possible war. He would pick special men to help him; to keep pace, one with shipbuilding, another with engines, a third with artillery, a fourth with torpedo construction; another group would follow naval tactics in communication with their own and in observation of foreign navies; the chief himself and his best assistants would keep their attention for the war—that is,



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they would be ever picking the brains of all the rest for anything that could throw light upon their great design of victory over the enemy or the enemies.

If such a man were in authority over a navy, and were backed up by his Government, he would be ready when the moment for action came. Of course without all the assistance needed in his own office, and without authority to see that the preparation (that is, the navy) was kept level with the requirements of the war foreseen in his mind, the best man would be comparatively helpless. Such a man, with his set of assistants or staff, is the first requisite for victory. It matters nothing what you call him. The essential thing is to put knowledge in authority. Knowledge means a man, not a committee, and the knowledge wanted is of war. The whole history of war by sea and land is a series of instances to prove that the first secret of success is to

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get the man of knowledge at the head, and to give power to his arm. All recent wars prove that he must, so to speak, enlarge himself by a staff of skilled helpers, men who have nothing to do except to be extra compartments of his brain.

Mr. J. R. Soley, in his essay entitled "The Blockade and the Cruisers," in which seven years ago he sought to embody some of the naval lessons of the great civil war in his own country, thinks the chief lesson of that war was the need for a naval general staff.

It is the essence (he says) of a good organization that every branch should have its own work, and should confine itself to that; and for that, and that alone, it should be held to the fullest responsibility. The province of a bureau is to furnish a gun, or a hull, or an engine, or a crew, the best possible that can be obtained; and to devolve upon its chief the duty of planning campaigns is only to divert him from his legitimate business, and would, in the nature of things, result disastrously both to the campaign and the bureau. The general direction of military and naval



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operations, if we are to accept the testimony of the highest authorities and the evidence of the most successful campaigns, is the work of men bred in the business. It cannot be done successfully, according to demands of modern warfare, by this or that officer picked up on the spur of the moment, or by boards of officers created as the exigency arises. It must be put in the hands of those who have spent much labour and thought in examining and fastening upon the strong and weak points of all possible enemies; who have made their office the repository of all possible information . . . . and finally, who are studying, not gunnery, nor machinery, nor construction, nor fleet-tactics alone, but the science of WAR, in all its bearings, as an actual, living, and above all a growing science. In short, the direction of naval operations, like that of military operations, should be entrusted to a previously trained and previously equipped general staff.

Sir Geoffrey Hornby in April, 1890, urged upon the country and the Government "to prepare for the unforeseen by establishing a naval staff . . . . and thereby conduce more to the strength of her Majesty's navy than even the reinforcement of ships it has ensured to it." A general staff was established for

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the French navy in 1891. The British navy is still without one.

To create a general staff and appoint its chief is to select a War Director and to set him to work as the preparer of the navy for war, and as the guider of the strategical and tactical studies—in a word, the war studies—of the best qualified officers. It is the only sure way of giving a Government proper guidance in the work of constructing or enlarging the navy, and in all the elaborate arrangements that must be carried out during peace to be ready for war. In this all-important matter the French have three years' start of us. It is difficult to see in that fact a ground for expecting victory in a war against France to be prompt and decisive.

Too much importance may be attached to numbers. There is something ominous to an Englishman about the idea of securing the command of the sea by an invincible

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armada. But for the plan of "shadowing" an enemy's fleets a great numerical superiority is indispensable.

You will tell off your squadrons against French squadrons, and send them out to get in touch. Suppose, then, that the French go into port—to Toulon, Brest, Cherbourg, Calais, Dunkirk, or any of their well-fortified seaports. Your squadrons must then blockade those fleets in port—that is, wait outside or near the ports where they are, keeping watch for them till they come out, and whenever a French fleet comes out the English one waiting for it must attack it. Now the whole plan rests upon being sure in every such case of winning the battle. If one French fleet coming out beats the English fleet waiting for it, the whole scheme breaks down, for the escaped fleet will go to the next blockaded port and there combine with the fleet inside to attack the blockading force. It is

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evidently a bold assumption that an English fleet will invariably beat a French fleet of equal numbers. It is taking for granted that your tactics, your officers, your men, your ships, and your guns are each and all better than the French. But even upon this assumption an equal force cannot maintain a blockade. To ensure that there shall be an equal force ready to fight the blockaded fleet if it comes out the blockaders must have a margin of superiority.

In 1803, when the English navy had an undoubted qualitative superiority over the French, 57 line-of-battle-ships and 40 frigates, with a reserve in the Downs of six ships of the line and four frigates, were employed to blockade in seven French, Dutch, and Spanish ports 42 ships of the line and 24 cruisers.

The proportion of force required at the present day for this kind of blockade has been settled by high authority—a committee

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of three British admirals. They say that at each port the blockaders must have two cruisers for each one blockaded. As regards battleships they say that if there is a convenient anchorage near the port the blockaders must have not less than four to three, and that otherwise they must not have less than five to three. They explain that these numbers are necessary to allow a sufficient margin for casualties and for the inevitable periodical absence of a portion of the blockading squadron. A fourth admiral (P. H. Colomb) has interpreted this to mean "that if you want to keep three ships off an enemy's port you will require to provide five, because contingencies will always keep two ineffective at any given moment." It will hardly be safe to assume that a good anchorage can be found by an enemy off every French naval arsenal. We may, perhaps, make the favourable assumption that for half of the blockading squadrons anchorages can be found. We

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then have for the minimum numbers required to carry out this plan two cruisers to each of the enemy's, and dividing the enemy's battleships into groups of six, we must put down nine of our own battleships for each group. Here are the actual numbers of the two navies, taken from a recent Parliamentary Return:—

| | In Commission. | | | In Reserve. | | | Total. | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Battleships. | Coast Defence Ships. | Cruisers. | Battleships. | Coast Defence Ships. | Cruisers. | Battleships. | Coast Defence Ships. | Cruisers. |
| French . | 18 | 4 | 31 | 9 | 10 | 18 | 27 | 14 | 49 |
| English* | 24 | 4 | 63 | 15 | 12 | 53 | 39 | 16 | 116 |

To blockade the French 49 cruisers we should require 98, leaving us 18 over to protect our trade against French cruisers improvised before or during the war. To

* Omitting Australian and Indian ships.

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blockade the 27 French battleships we ought to have at least 40, so that we are one short. It might be managed with our 39 ships if we were lucky in finding anchorages, and if we could do without a reserve anywhere. But, unfortunately, there are the coast defence ships. Our own coast defence ships are not battleships for the purpose of blockade off an enemy's port; while the French vessels of the same class will certainly add to the difficulties of blockade, some of them being powerful battleships. These fourteen extra vessels make the whole scheme break down. Without them the operation might be feasible, always supposing the English to be sure of defeating an equal force. But if the fourteen coast defence ships count for anything at all, the whole blockade must break down.

Thus the British numerical superiority at the best only approaches the margin of sufficiency for blockade. No commander-in-chief will undertake such an operation,

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which must be successful at all points to be of any use, without a force which he is satisfied is adequate, and without some available reserve. These numerical comparisons and the weakness of the British organization at the Admiralty are some of the reasons which make it seem probable that a war with France, in which neither side had an ally, would in 1894 or 1895 be a war not of the first but of the second class. As such I described it in discussing the Mediterranean, to which I shall return in my next paper.

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## VI

## READINESS AND THE RIGHT PLACE

If it is a mistake to keep in the Mediterranean a fleet numerically inferior to the French forces in that sea, how did such an arrangement come to be made? It is a tradition, a measure, adopted at some time for a reason good and sufficient in the conditions of that time, and afterwards kept on as a matter of course. All administration is apt to become routine. A first-rate manager does a number of new things appropriate to the conditions he has to meet. Second-rate successors repeat these things without troubling themselves about reasons and conditions.

There have been in the past two sufficient

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reasons for keeping up a British Mediterranean fleet. It was long a part of British policy to prevent Russia from acquiring, or even from attacking, Constantinople and the Dardanelles. For this purpose it was rational to keep at hand the means of opposing a Russian move. Forty years ago the whole nation acquiesced in this intention. So long as Great Britain was the exclusive possessor of naval force she could always assert herself in the Sea of Marmora. When she had lost her naval monopoly the defence of the entrance to the Mediterranean against Russia could still be carried on in alliance with France.

But with a hostile France become a great naval Power, this anti-Russian intention cannot be realized by England alone. No Cabinet dare send a British squadron for war into the Sea of Marmora, or even to Besika Bay, so long as the French navy is a probable enemy and undefeated, and so long

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as England is without allies. Of course England acting in conjunction with other Powers might do what she could not do alone. The co-operation of Italy would make a great difference, for the Italian and British navies combined would, under proper direction, be equal to the task of keeping engaged all the French naval forces, and at the same time operating against the Russians.

The alliance of Italy and the co-operation of the Italian fleet is not to be had by itself. Italy in alliance with England alone would be exposed in a war with France to the full force of the French army, against which England can give her no direct protection. Italy would risk more than she could possibly gain. Therefore her alliance can be obtained only in case that of Germany goes with it.

Further, it is evident that a naval force alone is not enough to carry on an effective

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war against Russia for the defence of the Bosphorus, and that England and Italy are not favourably placed for providing a military force to co-operate with their fleets. The help of Austria is required; and that of the small Balkan States, at least of Roumania and Bulgaria, would be useful.

It would seem then that the only condition in which a British fleet in the Mediterranean can be usefully employed for the defence of Constantinople is that the Triple Alliance should be a Quadruple Alliance, with England a definitive member of the partnership.

Lord Salisbury's Cabinet made no secret of its policy of resistance to Russia in co-operation with Austria, and presumably, therefore, with Italy also, although the same Cabinet repeatedly denied that any compact or alliance had been made with Italy. Yet the efficient co-operation of two navies requires not only an alliance but a military conven-

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tion precisely regulating the distribution of roles to the fleets and the relations between the commanders. To defer these matters till war has begun is to be caught unready and without a plan, and thereby to neutralize the advantages of the alliance. The declarations made by Lord Salisbury's Government make it certain that no military connection with Italy existed at that time. The present Cabinet is deeply committed by all its traditions against any alliance with the Central Powers.

The first reason, then, which at one time justified the presence of a British fleet in the Mediterranean—that it could be employed for the protection of Constantinople—has ceased to exist. No such use for the fleet is possible in a war in which England is without allies, and so long as all our politicians believe that public opinion is against an alliance, an alliance is out of the question.

There is a second tradition which is the

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origin, and was in its day the perfect justification, of the maintenance of the Mediterranean fleet, as well as of the general distribution of the several British squadrons to their stations. It is the tradition of the command of the sea. At the time when England was the first naval Power and there was no second, when she was sole mistress of the seas, arrangements admirably suited to that position were set on foot. That remarkable state of things is dead and gone—it is a proud recollection and little more; but many of the arrangements then made have been continued in spite of the complete revolution in all the conditions which dictated them.

If it were strong enough, the Mediterranean squadron would be in the right place. For the moment a war with France is in the least degree likely, you must move your fleets within striking distance of the French fleets and keep watch upon them. The moment you are sure that war cannot be



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averted, every one of your admirals must attack the fleet he is watching. But in order to have the probabilities of victory on his side each admiral should have a stronger fleet than is opposed to him. It is evident that the moment war is apprehended the French will reinforce their fleets. If they mean war at all they will so instruct their admirals that any one of them who finds an opportunity to win a battle will at once attack, irrespective of declarations of war. Thus if, during peace, your Mediterranean fleet is smaller than the whole French force, in commission and reserve, in that sea, the French will retire their fleet in commission towards Toulon, followed by the British admiral watching them with his scouts. The French reserve fleet will join the fleet in commission, and the French admiral thus having the superior force will at once attack. Of course you will trust in British luck and pluck; but you would do better by your

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admiral to insure him at least an equal force. This you can hardly do unless you give it him from the beginning, that is unless he always has it. For, if the French and English reserve fleets begin to mobilize at the same time and keep pace, the French will have the start by the number of days needed to steam from Portsmouth to a point off Toulon. The British admiral may retire towards Gibraltar. He cannot go to Malta, as that would be to let the two French fleets (Channel and Mediterranean) unite; for all that has been said of the Mediterranean fleets applies also to those in the Channel. But at Gibraltar he may meet not the British but the French Channel Squadron, and thus find himself between two fires.

However we try to work it out, we shall find that the plan of suddenly "mobilizing" a reserve is of no avail if the reserve includes any part of the force needed in the first combinations of a war. If you aspire



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to command the sea, you require a force vastly superior to the enemy's, and that force must strike at once, possibly before the enemy declares war, though you can always comply with formalities by declaring war before you fight. Your superior force must, therefore, be always ready, without the delays involved, first in mobilization, and then in moving off to the scene of action. A reserve in the true sense, is either a force which, though ready, is kept by the commander in chief at his own disposal, to be sent to one or the other admiral the moment the situation permits of a decision; or a stock of men, ships, and guns, upon which to draw as the casualties of war make gaps in the fleets before the enemy. It is only in the latter sense that you can safely delay its "mobilization" until the eve of a war.

The modern parades of mobilization are a sample of the bad effect which results from trying to copy at sea the practices of land

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war. In a modern land war the nation is called to arms. Mobilization is the passage of the nation from industrial life into fighting trim. But a whole nation cannot go to sea, and the analogy between mobilizing a nation for the field, and putting a fleet into its true place is altogether misleading. To mobilize Great Britain for war, is to have five army corps in fighting trim, and the whole railway system ready to plant them wherever they may be needed to pin a French expeditionary force to the shore. The Empire you cannot mobilize. After the first shot is fired every post beyond the sea will have to protect itself with whatever men and guns are there, against any attack that evades the fleets. In short, while a Continental nation mobilizes itself as the first act of war, the British Empire must have everything ready in peace, and when war comes ought to need nothing more by way of preparation than to call out or mobilize the military

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reserves at home, and the naval forces supplementary to the first line.

Suppose, then, that we reinforce in peace the Mediterranean fleet, will that help us? Only upon certain conditions. It would be wise first to construct a mole at Gibraltar, and to build docks there, in which ironclads and cruisers can be repaired, as well as to make sure that the fortress is so armed as to be able to protect them. But, above all it would be prudent to make sure that your war will be with France alone. If you have to deal with Russia also, your reinforcement will need to be very large. To have a war with one Power on your hands is no reason for assuming that you will not have a second. On the contrary, it is the very best reason for expecting a second, because a Power that would like to hit you but dare not, will pluck up courage when you have your hands full. But there is Italy. Will not the Italian fleet help us? Yes; if Italy is convinced that to

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help us is the best way to help herself. She can acquire that conviction only from the spectacle of an efficient British army and navy, and of a British determination to support the main purpose for which she intends to use her own forces: resistance to a subversion, detrimental to her interests, of existing territorial and other arrangements. In any case if you want the Italian fleet on your side you must decide soon. The Italians have not forgotten that "Outidanos" advised them to agree with France, and that one-half of your politicians echoed his advice. If they were to take it, the Italian fleet would not be with you, but against you.

In any case the centre of gravity of the naval war is in the Mediterranean. So long as the principal French fleet, or the principal forces of a French combination, are in that sea, the principal British fleet or the principal forces of a British combination must be there also. So long as the hostile combina-

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tion maintains separate fleets in different seas a dispersion or distribution of forces for the purpose of attacking them all at once is the best game, provided you are strong enough to play it; but it requires an assured superiority of force and consummate mastery in the direction. If you are not equal to it you must concentrate—that is, you must collect for the principal fight force enough to make sure of winning it, even though to do this you have opposed to the enemy's minor fleet a force merely its equal, or even so weak as to be able to do little more than watch. If you win in the main conflict the enemy will take little benefit from a success in the subordinate sphere. The present distribution of the French fleets and those of the principal possible allies for either side puts the key of the whole situation into the Mediterranean.

Suppose, then, that in a duel with France we have stationed in the Mediterranean a

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fleet large enough to make victory there reasonably secure, that thereby we reduce the force operating against the French in the Atlantic or the Channel, and that, by ill-luck, a battle in this nearer theatre of war should go against us. In that case no doubt the French would attempt to land a portion of their army in England. It would be a risk on their part, certainly, but war is made up of risks. We must be able and ready to meet such an attempt without recalling our fleet from the Mediterranean. In other words, we must have at home a military force both sufficient and efficient for this purpose. At this moment we have it not. Therefore the ships that should be in the Mediterranean are kept at home to be "mobilized on the approach of war," that is to do the work for which, if the War Office were an institution for war, the volunteers and the "two army corps" would be ready. The last word of naval and military wisdom is co-operation

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between army and navy. The first word of the present situation is that the War Office and the Admiralty are not agreed how they ought to co-operate one with another, and that neither of them is ready for war. Yet in these days war comes not by mail coach but by telegraph.

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## VII

## THE ACTUAL SITUATION

In a war with France, England in her present condition could not begin in possession of the command of the sea. She would have to fight for it—in all probability without allies. Are there any substantial demonstrable facts upon which to base the hope of victory? It is no use alleging our superior resources. Every one is agreed that China has vastly greater resources than Japan, but it is by no means clear that China will be able to turn them to account in time to avert disaster. A month of unsuccessful war would cause a startling collapse in our resources, for it would bring with it widespread commercial and industrial ruin. When

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the revolutionary war began in 1793 there was a distinct reason why the British navy should be likely to beat the French, for the French navy had lost almost the whole of its officers, who were Royalists. How do the two navies stand to-day, apart from numbers? We may leave out pluck. It is always a mistake to assume that you have it and that the other side has not, and the French are a brave nation.

The elements of which a good fight is made up are the general management, the handling of fleets, or "teams" of ships; the handling of the individual ships; straight shooting, good guns, and good ships. In which of these points are we better than the French?

In guns? The history of the Ordnance Department until a year or two ago was one long course of evidence against our guns, and though the system has recently been changed there is no positive evidence that it

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has been made sound. In gunnery? Are we quite sure that our gunners, trained up to an average, are as good shots as the picked men whom the French train up to a special standard?

Upon some of the other points none but naval officers are qualified to judge, but our own naval officers are rightly forbidden to express opinions which can be construed into criticism of the authorities. The public does not know what our own officers think. But the opinions of some of the best naval officers of friendly Powers are known. They may think many degrees worse of our navy than they would care to say, but this much they have said: that our ships have suffered in design from the want of a system to insure that the wishes of the officers who will have to work and fight them are properly met: that it is a very black omen that we are short of officers and of stokers; that although we have the tradition of seaman-

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ship, what is wanted for modern war is not the management of sails and spars, but the direction of a floating labyrinth of machinery. It is doubted by these foreign though friendly observers whether, in an age of progressive science, the education of our officers has kept pace with the times; and it is generally held that the French navy has paid more attention than any other navy whatever to systematic tactics—that is, to the art of working a number of modern men-of-war with all their auxiliaries as one team.

Thus the evidence as to the quality of the two navies is not by any means so satisfactory as we are apt to assume. In the general management of a war—or, to use the technical term, "strategy"—the French have gained a decided start, for they have a strategy department or general staff, and we have none. We must therefore expect them to have their plan of campaign better thought out and better directed.

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We are left with our superior numbers. But we are so short of trained men that we cannot use all the ships we have. Of course when war comes we shall call for men, and thousands will respond. But the call and the response will not teach them the business of stoking, shooting, or engine-driving. To put untrained men to act as enginemen, stokers, or crews on a modern ironclad is like asking the first man you meet in the street to set up the type for to-morrow's newspaper. Such of our ships as we can man will hardly be ready. The whole French fleet (twenty-seven battleships, fourteen coast-defence ships, and forty-nine cruisers, according to the return) can put to sea at forty-eight hours' notice, and if war were declared this evening the French torpedo flotillas would be in the Downs and off Spithead and Plymouth before to-morrow morning.

These are the hard facts of the situation in

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October, 1894, well known to all concerned except the British public.

What is required is a national policy. This does not mean a "national party," which is a contradiction in terms, but simply that the nation should make up its mind what it wants and take reasonable means to have it. The nation needs to secure the probability of victory at sea in a war which may come to-morrow. Every other object that any of us desire is dependent upon this. If there is to be the loss of trade and hazard of Empire involved in a prolonged war in which victory is doubtful, the minor ends for which we are contending among ourselves will all prove illusions. What is Unionism to an Empire shaken, or Home Rule to four impoverished nations, or an eight-hours' day to working-classes thrown out of employment, or Socialism to a people fighting for its life? Is it not clear that the paramount object of British policy at the present time

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must be to recover that security for the Empire which is to be had in war only from the command of the sea?

This is, however, a purpose not easily to be attained, for it does not depend upon our own action alone. No doubt if, under proper direction, we spent upon the navy for five successive years sums bearing the same proportion to the value of our seaborne trade as the annual expenditure upon the French navy bears to the seaborne trade of France, we could before the year 1900 create the *matériel* of a navy equal to all the other navies of the world together, though we could not in five years, even were the Admiralty transformed into an efficient war directorate to-day, overcome the difficulties of manning and officering such a navy. But would the rival Powers look on idle? They would have to choose between abandoning their political opposition to us, or striking before our new preparations could be available.



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We are in this dilemma, that if we expand the navy at a moderate rate, the rival navies will increase in the same proportion, and that if we attempt greatly to force the pace in order to outstrip them, we may thereby precipitate the conflict. The most perfect preparation will not secure us until it is complete, or at any rate well advanced.

Meantime, how is a war to be prevented? Assuredly not by neglecting what is going on in the world and by conceding to all parties that make claims against us. It can be done only by entering into the community of nations and taking a side in the questions of the day. If your maxim is "I care for nobody" you must be prepared for its corollary, "Nobody cares for me." Observation of the other nations shows that there is no such thing as isolation, least of all for an island state seated in the world's highway, and the centre of a maritime empire. The great armies of Europe mean that other

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nations have their problem of self-defence. Will not the self-defence of England be a great help to the self-defence of some other Powers? If that is the case they would co-operate with us, not for our own sake—no other Power will, if it can avoid it, enter into a struggle for existence in order that Britannia may rule the waves—but for their own convenience. England, therefore, must not only show herself in earnest in her preparations for defence, but must so regulate her dealings with the rest of the world that the defence of her own rights will always at the same time be the defence of rights which some other Powers are also interested in maintaining.

A national policy, then, involves three elements; the preparation of a navy equal to the requirements of the Empire; the preparation of an army able to co-operate adequately with the navy in the conflict for the command of the sea; and a due recog-



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nition of the interests which England has in common with other Powers. You must have a sound navy, a sound army, and a sound foreign policy.

There is only one way in which you can obtain a sound navy. You must find a man who understands war and understands modern sea fighting, and you must put him, with all the assistance he requires, to design your naval wars and to conduct them when they come. To his design your navy must be framed. But your director must really direct. That is to say, if and when the Cabinet overrules his opinion he must not be kept in his post as director to gain your confidence for the Cabinet. So long as he is at his post you will have the guarantee of his personality that to the best of his judgment the navy is in as good a state as possible. And if the Cabinet overrule him it must be possible to trace in the records the nature of the

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disagreement. The same principles apply to the army.

In both services the curse of the present system is anonymity. Almost every decision made for either service is like the leading article in a morning paper, of which no one knows who wrote it, and which often enough was written by a competent man with clear views, altered by a less competent man with other views, and then altered again by a third man who knew less of the subject than either and disagreed with both. But every decision made in the services from top to bottom should be like a signed article, for which the writer answers with his reputation, however much discussion and advice he may have had during its composition. Responsibility simply means that a man and his work go together. If you make him put his name to it you have a guarantee that he has done his best. You know whom to blame if need be, and, what is far more important, you

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know whom to encourage. Anonymous work gives no guarantee, because the man can always escape from his mistakes, and receives for the best that he does no more than his stipulated pay. But the best work is never done for pay alone.

These reforms in the War Office and the Admiralty can be obtained by taking the proper means—that is, in this country, by organizing votes. There are still some thousands of Englishmen to whom the security of the Empire is dearer than the most highly advertised party nostrum. Suppose they arrange among themselves to vote against every candidate not pledged to the purpose they hold sacred. They will be able to settle the fate of many seats, perhaps to turn the balance in a general election. But it is no use extorting vague pledges and fair words from candidates. You must agree upon a test resolution, to which you must adhere, and compel every man to bind him-

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self to it before you will vote for him. The resolution should convey a refusal of the House of Commons to vote any supplies at all until the army (or navy) estimates are countersigned by the officer appointed as war director for the army (or navy) in terms which imply that he is satisfied with the provision made for the war needs of his own service.

Having thus secured that the navy and the army shall be turned into institutions for war—at present they are institutions for everything but war—you must banish the Treasury and all its men from the offices where the Army and Navy Estimates are framed. The Treasury may check off the accounts as much as you like, to see that the money has been spent as Parliament directed. But if you allow the Treasury, as you now do, to dictate to the army and the navy about every sixpence they ask for in the estimates, you had better at once make

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the Chancellor of the Exchequer Commander-in-Chief of both services. When the two offices have drawn up their estimates, let the two Ministers who represent them in the Cabinet fight the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the total amounts. But if the Cabinet will not ask Parliament for as much as the heads of the services think needed, it is for those heads, and not for the Treasury, to decide in what items a reduction shall be made.

To secure a sound foreign policy is a far more difficult matter. For the first condition is that you must have a statesman at the head of affairs. How, it may be asked, are we to know a statesman when we see him? The answer is plain: "Ye shall know them by their fruits." You have a great empire, as wonderful in its character and its uses as any of those that in days gone by have risen and fallen and perished. It came by the command of the sea, and all

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men know and have ever repeated that by the command of the sea it must stand, or there will be a fall like that of Carthage, or of Athens, or of Spain. For many years there have been warnings from the best of your soldiers and sailors, while every nation in the world has been wondering whether you have lost the insight and energy which were the glory of your fathers. All the time you have had two sets of Ministers taking turns of office and of opposition. But what have either set done to secure the Empire? The most tremendous exposure of any system of administration ever made was contained in the Report of Sir James Stephen's Commission in 1887, and confirmed in the Report of Lord Hartington's Commission in 1890. But neither side when in office has attempted reform. The Ministries have been content to be driven by public clamour into naval programmes, while refusing to undertake that transfor-

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mation of the War Office and of the Admiralty which alone will insure that the programmes will meet the needs. One man alone, Lord Charles Beresford, has refused to remain in office under a false system. The rest have sat still in office or in opposition, and entertained you with every conceivable political scheme, except the safeguarding of your Empire, your trade, and your homes. At this moment all three are in danger. You listen and applaud while each side abuses the other about everything that its leaders say or do. And this while your whole national existence, your wealth, and your vaunted freedom hang in the balance.

You are like the Emperor in the fairy tale. There came to his court a company who gave out that they spun and wove the most wondrous cloth that ever was, a fabric invisible except to the wise. All the folk crowded to see them plying their spindles

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and their loom, and all agreed that their thread and their cloth were marvellous. The court and the Emperor went and admired. Then the weavers presented to the Emperor robes of state from their loom, which he graciously accepted, and went in procession through the capital arrayed in the new robes that all might see their beauty. Great was the admiration expressed by all beholders, whose wisdom was proved by their power to see the fabric. But at the corner of a street stood a little child at its mother's knee, and said in the innocence of its heart as the procession passed, "But, mother, the Emperor has nothing on!" Then common-sense returned to the crowd and to the court and to the Emperor, and those artful weavers were heard of no more.

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## VIII

## A SPECIFIC PROPOSAL

Do you want the British Empire made safe or not? If you don't care about it close this book and read no further. If you think the Empire or the country safe already, this chapter is not addressed to you. It is meant only for those who see that both Great Britain and the British Empire are in peril because a war is drifting towards us for which we are not ready. To the reader who is aware of this, and to him only, I am now speaking.

We are both of us clear that unless something is done soon there will be a great calamity. What, then, is to be done, and how are we to do it? You and I have little

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or no power to influence the Government except by our vote at an election and by letting it be known how we mean to use it, so that for us the practical question is, Whom shall we vote for? I will tell you exactly what I am going to do. I shall write out one sentence, the text of a resolution to be moved in the House of Commons; I shall go at election time, or sooner, to each of the candidates in my division and shall say, "Do you pledge yourself to vote for that resolution under all circumstances? I will vote for no candidate who does not give that pledge without reserve. I shall put in my pocket my opinions (strong and clear though they are) about the House of Lords, about Ireland, about Labour questions, and all other questions, and shall decide my vote solely by the assurance I obtain on this one question of defence, and on the one resolution about it. If I can get five hundred men in my division to join me in this I am certain to get the

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pledge I want from one of the candidates, if not from all. Suppose this is done in every division, the result will be either that both parties will take our pledge, and that our resolution will be carried without a division when Parliament meets, or that only one party will take it, and will win the next general election. In either case the result we want will be obtained. We shall fail only in case there are not enough voters determined upon defence to turn the balance of an election. But in that case the nation and the Empire are doomed, and you and I can but prepare to behave our two individual selves like men when the hour of trial comes.

What we have to do, then, is to find a resolution certain to produce the effect we want—in other words, a resolution which, if carried in the House of Commons must lead to the national defences being set in order. That result will not come except from the right wording. It is, for example, no good

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saying "that national defence is the first duty of the Cabinet." Every Cabinet Minister has known that for twenty years. It is no use you and I expounding to the Cabinet or to our candidate how they are to defend the nation. If we say "more money," or "more ships," or "more men," we shall only be taking upon ourselves the Cabinet's work, and trying to administer the services through the roundabout machinery of a general election. What you and I want is that the navy and the army shall be got ready for the war which they may have to fight. The armies and fleets to be fought are all in existence, and can be seen and counted. No unknown fleet can come from the moon, no army from the South Pole, to attack this country. Now there are men who understand war, and who even can tell exactly how a given fleet, or a given army can be beaten, can say how many ships, guns, and men are needed for the work, and where they must be sent to do

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it. There is only one way in which any Government in any country can prepare for defence. It consists in first finding a man who knows war, then asking him what arrangements would be needed to fight and defeat the navy or the army (or both) of Power A, Power B, Power C, or of Powers A and B or A and C, or A B and C all together? When he has worked that out a Government wishing to be ready for war would make the arrangements he advises, possibly with modifications in which he would concur. Common sense suggests that he would be the best man to supervise the preparations. At any rate a competent man must be there to see that what is provided is according to the pattern or programme. It should be observed that the first and most important item of any arrangement for war is to provide a conductor, a general, or admiral, to direct the campaign. The man who is fit for this post is the very man who

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would give the Government the best advice as to the arrangements required.

My idea, therefore, is to compel the Government to find and appoint two war directors, one for the navy and one for the army; and to call upon each of them every year for his specification of the navy (army) he would require to beat the French (or Russian, or French and Russian) navy (or army). I think he should sign this document, and that the reports of both the war directors (the naval and the military) should be always laid before the Cabinet before they consider either army or navy estimates. A great deal of detailed work would be required before either director could frame his opinion, and for that he would need ample assistance. Therefore, as soon as the Government has decided whom to consult, they should allow him to organize his office and to choose his assistants. The man who is to design the navy or the army, with a view to such fight-



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ing as it may have to do, should be the best man at war in his service; and if the best man has been found to design he would also be the best to superintend the execution, that is, the preparation and the fighting. These tasks are large enough, and the war director should have nothing else to do except plan and superintend.

It may be well to illustrate this idea of a war designer. Suppose you want an office, or a theatre, or a dwelling-house built for you. You will send for an architect and tell him exactly what the building is for, all that you require. He will then prepare a design and submit it to you. He may not do all the measuring and drawing himself, but he will get it done under his own eye by competent men, and put his own name on it, for it will be his design. Then you will go over it with him, suggesting modifications and changes, and after discussion he will revise the plans, which will still be his plans.

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Next a contractor will be found to erect the building under the architect's supervision. The test of the building when finished will be whether it suits the purpose for which it was wanted, and the proper judge of this is the man who pays for the construction, and for whose service it was erected. The British navy is a structure for the convenience of the British tax-payer, who finds the money. Its use is to defeat the navy or navies of any Power or Powers that may quarrel with Great Britain. The order for it is given by the Cabinet, with the approval of the House of Commons. But, startling as it may seem, it is a fact that the House of Commons has never seen, nor asked to see the design; has never asked whether there is a design; does not know the architect's name. Indeed, there is no architect, and apparently no design at all. Even the bill —the Navy Estimates—shows no purpose. It is an account for so many ships, guns and



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men, but it nowhere says: French navy, so many ships, guns, and men; needed to fight them, so many; provided for the purpose, so many; extra (or wanting) so many; reasons for providing more (or less) than required, such and such. The Estimates are signed by the Lords of the Admiralty; but in what capacity? Not as designers, not as men who certify that this navy is the one required to beat the French and Russian navies. If that were meant, the Civil Lords would not sign. There is no person whatever at the Admiralty whose duty it is to make out a table of foreign navies and to calculate from it what British navy is required to beat them.

My plan then is to compel the Cabinet to entrust some competent man with this duty, and to induce the House of Commons, before voting the money for the navy, to call for his design. Nothing more is wanted. I do not propose to interfere with the Cabinet, but to help them. They will make what

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estimates they like after seeing the design. The House of Commons, too, after knowing the design, or satisfying itself that there is one, will vote as its members think right. I do not even want the design published. But I do say that if the question, What is the navy for? is once brought before the Cabinet, and once brought before the House of Commons, there is sufficient common-sense in those two bodies to make it certain that the navy will at once be dealt with in a business way. The needs of war will be looked at and the navy at all points shaped according to them.

I, therefore, have no pet scheme of details to put forward; I will not tell you my particular fads about numbers of men, design of ships, bow-fire and broadside-fire, or anything else connected with the navy. It is ridiculous for us voters to try and carry fads, or to meddle with details; our business is to say to the Government, "You shall prepare the

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navy for war or we will turn you out. We will have no vague assurances. We insist on your doing what common-sense dictates. Therefore you must find a man whom we can trust, and set him to work out what is needed for war. If you take what he proposes we shall be satisfied; if not, you shall tell the House of Commons why you don't."

Suppose, then, that the Cabinet appoints an admiral and a general, one as war designer and director for the navy, the other as war designer and director for the army. The duties of the naval war designer and director will serve as a sample for both services. He will prepare a balance sheet, showing:—

1. Foreign navies just as they are.

2. The navy of England as it should be on the outbreak of any of the possible wars with one or more of the Powers having these navies, including all arrangements needed of every kind.

3. The steps necessary to change the

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British navy of to-day into the navy specified under head (2).

4. So much of the preparations described under head (3) as can be carried out, using all practicable energy, in one year, with their cost. This fourth heading will be his proposal for the Navy Estimates for the coming year.

This paper will be signed by the admiral, designer, or director who has prepared it, and will then be submitted by the First Lord of the Admiralty to the Cabinet. A similar paper signed by the army war designer will be submitted by the Secretary of State for War. With these papers before them the Cabinet will then settle exactly as they please the amounts to be asked of Parliament for the navy and for the army. They may ask for half of what the admiral and the general want, or for all of it. But when the estimates are laid before the House of Commons the House will ask for the directors' balance

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sheets, as the guide by which to judge whether the money is needed, and whether it is to be rightly spent. The Cabinet may object to the documents being published. In that case the House will appoint a select committee pledged, like the Cabinet, to secrecy, to read the balance-sheets, to hear the views of the two directors and of the Cabinet and to report. There can be no control of the estimates by the House unless either the whole House or a committee is told the facts. The secret committee to which full information is given is the plan adopted in Germany and in France; but the English House of Commons, the model of parliamentary government, has always, at least during this generation, allowed itself to be kept in ignorance of the facts, if there are any, upon which the Army and Navy Estimates are based.

This is my whole scheme. Let us have a competent war man in each office; let him

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examine the wars that are possible or likely and compare the navy and the army with the actual needs, and let the House of Commons be enabled to check off the estimates by the realities of war as foreseen by a man who can judge of them. This plan will secure what we want. It will not work by magic and instantaneously. But it will work. For observe what will happen. First of all the House of Commons will have its eyes opened. I have painted a very faint picture of what a war will be, and of our unreadiness. But the pictures that have been put before the responsible men, before Lord Salisbury and Lord Rosebery, by first-rate military and naval authorities are far darker than mine. They never reach the House of Commons. The House of Commons has never been told the truth. Either we are in danger, or are not. If, then, we can get our best General and our best Admiral locked up with a dozen members of the House to tell them the truth

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about a war, the result must be either that they will assure the House that all is well—I hope they will be able to do so—or they will declare that there is danger. Secondly, the Cabinet and the House of Commons having to hear both the admiral and the general will have to decide between them, and the country will very soon discover which of the two services requires the most attention. Lastly, the Cabinet once brought face to face with war as set forth by the competent men, and compelled to regard navy and army as instruments of war, will become aware that no one can relieve it of responsibility for national defence. When the Cabinet does its duty the nation will have no reason to be uneasy about the next war, for the command of the sea will be secure.

THE END.

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